Health Department and
Community Health Center

Tony Beltran, MBA
Executive Director

Population Health Services
500 W. Winchester Rd., Suite 102
Libertyville, Illinois 60048
Phone 847 377 8020
Fax 847 984 5622

Early Assistance Information on Septic Systems (Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems) and Private Water Wells.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the first step in building a new house on a site with well and septic?**
   Answer: Contact a Lake County licensed Septic System Designer and Soil Classifier/Soil Scientist to begin the site evaluation and design process.

2. **Are homeowners allowed to install their own septic system?**
   Answer: Even though Illinois Statutes allows a person who owns and occupies a single family dwelling to install their own system, it is not very practical because of the large specialized machinery needed to prepare a site and perform the necessary excavating backfilling and grading activities. In addition, the piping, pumps, compressors and controls that are very common on the majority of systems requires skilled craftsmen to assure correct assembly.

3. **Can a home be built on a site with wetlands and/or floodplain?**
   Answer: A building site must contain enough suitable soil area (as defined in the Lake County Code, Section 171.087) to construct a septic system. Soil located in and bordering a wetland is unsuitable for a septic system. An area that is in a floodplain commonly contains unsuitable soil but not always. Holding tanks are **not** an option for long term treatment of wastewater in Lake County. The cost to the homeowner to pump holding tanks is prohibitive on a long term basis and is not an option for unsuitable parcels of land.

4. **Can water wells and/or septic fields be shared by two or more houses?**
   Answer: Yes, in certain cases. Lake County Code, Chapters 170 and 171, do allow sharing of systems in certain circumstances. Contact an onsite wastewater /water well design specialist for further clarification.

5. **Who is allowed to perform soil testing in Lake County?**
   Answer: Soil Classifiers that are licensed by the Lake County Health Dept. are allowed to perform soil evaluations in our county. Perc testing is no longer used for determining the soil suitability of a site.

6. **How is the size of a septic field determined for a house?**
   Answer: The size of a septic field is determined by the number of bedrooms in a house and the characteristics of the soil determined by the soil evaluation. A bedroom is defined as any room in a dwelling that is suitable for regular use as private sleeping quarters for a person, including a room in a basement, that contains a closet and shares a common hallway with, or is adjoining a bathroom containing at least a toilet, lavatory and shower stall.

7. **What types of septic systems (fields) are there?**
   Answer: There are five general types – seepage trenches/beds, Wisconsin mound, at-grade, and modified mound, and drip dispersal. The soil conditions, and to a lessor extent the available area, determines the type of system that can be used and the degree of pretreatment required, i.e. septic tank, aerobic unit/filter. A lift station (pump) is always needed with a Wisconsin mound or modified mound, Wisconsin at-grade, and drip dispersal system, and is sometimes needed on seepage trench/bed systems.

8. **Question. What is an aerobic treatment unit?**
   Answer: An aerobic treatment unit (ATU) is a major component of many modern day septic systems. ATU's treat wastewater to a much higher degree than a septic tank and are usually required as a component of a septic system because of poor soils and/or small lots. The wastewater discharged from an ATU is relatively clear and odor free after aeration, but the wastewater still contains significant concentrations of nutrients and disease causing organisms therefore a septic field is still needed. Typical sizes for units for single family homes are 500, 600 and 750 gallons.